

Message Text

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PAGE 01 YAOUND 03518 120715Z
ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2841
INFO AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 3518

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, MARR, CM, NI
SUBJ: SITUATION ALONG NIGERIAN-CAMEROONIAN BORDER

REF: (A) YAOUNDE 3507, (B) STATE 187701, (C) LAGOS 9017,
(D) YAOUNDE 3409, (E) YAOUNDE 3379, (F) YAOUNDE 3310,
(G) YAOUNDE 333 (ALL NOTAL)

1. REF A REPORTS LATEST INFORMATION ON CAMEROONIAN CONCERN ABOUT NIGERIA. WE HAVE NO INDICATIONS THAT RUMORED NIGERIAN MILITARY BUILD UP ALONG NORTHERN FRONTIER HAS ACTUALLY TAKEN PLACE OR THAT CAMEROONIAN ARMY OFFICIALS ARE MORE CONCERNED THAN NORMAL OVER HAVING POTENTIAL TASK DEFENDING EXTENSIVE FRONTIER (1,050 MILES) WITH NEIGHBORING GIANT THAT HAS 250,000-MAN ARMY. OPPOSING THIS, CAMEROON HAS TOTAL 7,000 ARMY AND 6,500 GEN-DARMES, WITH ONLY GENDARMES IN NORTH. GENDARME NORTHERN LEIGION HEADQUARTERS LOCATED IN PRESIDENT'S HOMETOWN OF GAROUA. WITH SMALL DETACHMENTS SCATTERED THROUGHOUT PROVINCE. MILITARY UNITS ARE CONCENTRATED IN SOUTH, WHERE COUNTRY MORE DENSELY POPULATED.

2. MILITARY MANEUVERS HELD IN NORTH FROM APRIL 21 TO 24 REVEALED THAT AN INVADING FORCE (NIGERIAN?) WOULD HAVE LITTLE OR NO DIFFICULTY IN CUTTING COUNTRY IN TWO IN THE NORTH, PARTICULARLY IN THE GAROUA AREA. MILITARY THINKING IS TO
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STATION AN ARMY BATTALION IN THE NORTH, TO BE SUPPORTED BY CV-150'S BY 1980.

3. CAMEROONIAN FEARS OF THE NIGERIAN ELEPHANT HAVE BEEN REPORTED REPEATEDLY. THE WHOLE FRONTIER AREA IS EXTREMELY POROUS, WITH VILLAGERS PASSING FREELY TO AND FROM MARKETS ON EITHER SIDE; AND SMUGGLERS, SOME WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF BORDER GUARDS

WHO HAVE BEEN "TAKEN CARE OF," HAVE LITTLE DIFFICULTY IN CARRYING ON BRISK ILLICIT TRADE. THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF INCIDENTS IN THE RIO DEL REY AREA, WHERE CAMEROONAIN AUTHORITIES HAVE APPREHENDED NIGERIAN SMUGGLERS, AND AT LEAST ONE SUCH INCIDENT RESULTED IN FATALITIES. (SEE REF G.)

4. WITH THE LOCATION OF OIL PRODUCTION PLATFORMS NEAR NIGERIAN BORDER AND ANTICIPATED CONSTRUCTION OF REFINERY ON COAST EXPOSED TOWARD NIGERIAN MARITIME BORDER, IT IS ONLY NATURAL THAT CAMEROONIAN FEARS NIGERIAN COLOSSUS, PARTICULARLY FROM A MILITARY/STRATEGIC POINT OF VIEW, WOULD HAVE MORE CURRENCY. HOWEVER, OUR CONTACTS DO NOT INDICATE ANY INCREASED CONCERN CAUSED BY ALLEGED NIGERIAN TROOP BUILD UP IN NORTH. ONE MIGHT SPECULATE THAT IF IN FACT SUCH A BUILD-UP HAS TAKEN PLACE, IT IS PERHAPS DUE NIGERIAN CONCERN WITH EVENTS IN CHAD AND BORDER INCIDENTS BETWEEN THOSE TWO COUNTRIES.

5. PERHAPS EMBASSY LAGOS AND CONSULATE KADUNA ARE IN A BETTER POSITION TO FURNISH INFORMATION ON NIGERIAN UNITS LOCATED NEAR CAMEROONIAN FRONTIER, AND LAGOS/NDJAMENA COMMENT ON THEIR BORDER SITUATION.

6. VISIT NIGERIAN HEAD OF STATE OBASANJO WILL BE REPORTED BY SEPTTEL. AS INDICATED REFTTEL C, BORDER SITUATCON WAS SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION, WITH GOVERNORS FROM SOUTHWEST AND NORTHERN PROVINCES (BOTH BORDERING NIGERIAL) PARTICIPATING.
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